

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

All children will learn. No child will be left behind. At first thought it is a challenge that we all endorse. Then we begin to ask – what do children learn, how do they learn it, when do they learn, where do they learn, who do they learn it from, how do we prove they learned it, how do we pay for it – and it goes on and on. In essence, the educational charge has changed. However, we have educational systems in place that have not significantly changed to meet this new challenge. It will take different thinking and a break from traditional school structures, and we will have to do it utilizing existing resources.

This school year Ellis School has taken a break from tradition. The faces are the same, but some of their roles have changed. We began the school year with two school principals – one for the elementary and one for the middle school grades. In doing so, we were able to eliminate the curriculum and student management administrative positions and save the district money. More importantly, we were able to improve educational leadership by having each principal responsible for all functions including curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student behavior management for all children within their respective grade levels. In other words the elementary principal is accountable for student learning in grades preschool through grade 4 and the middle school principal accountable for student learning in grades 5 through 8. This separation of responsibility recognizes the differences between elementary and middle school students, and makes for better communication between the school principal, students, staff, parents, and community members.

We have also looked at our teaching staff to better utilize their talents in meeting the challenge - all children will learn. We have reassigned some of our staff to provide two literacy teachers – one in grades 1 to 2 and one in grades 5 to 6. In doing so, we are able to provide vital literacy support in the early years of both the elementary and middle schools. We have also instituted individualized student testing to determine if students are at grade level and if students are making adequate learning gains every year in reading, language, and mathematics. Our goal is to provide instruction to meet the individual needs of students and to document that every student has learned.

We are at the point where the critical supporting structures are in place, and we will be building the rest of the bridge while we walk on it. It is important that we stay the course for it will take several years. It will be challenging, however, it is also important to remember that during this time we have much to be thankful for. Our high school students have a home at Sanborn Regional High School. Our elementary and middle school students have additional space both in school and out with the new addition and playgrounds. We have a caring staff, children eager to learn, and a supportive community. With that going for us, the bridge will be built in record time.

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